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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights three models for implementing local restructuring of schools: James Comer's School Development Program; Robert Slavin's Success for All; and Henry Levin's Accelerated Schools. These models have been among the more popular models for restructuring schools in poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods with traditionally low-achieving students. Separate sections describe and analyze each of these programs individually. Further sections address important issues and themes common to all the programs. One of these sections discusses evaluation and assessment issues of both programs and students. A further section looks at the three models from the viewpoint of traditional assessments. A discussion of what causes improvements in learning notes that: Comer's model is based on healing conflicts and creating an ethos that fosters identification and bonding and a community of trust; Slavin's model is more heavily cognitive; and Levin's format calls for active, intelligent participation of all members. Final sections review resources and costs for the various programs, and efforts at replication. An author biography is included. (Contains 49 references.) (JB)

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CHANGING SCHOOLS FOR URBAN STUDENTS: The School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, and Success for All

Carol Ascher
Teachers College, Columbia University

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Carol Ascher
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Box 40, Teachers College
Columbia University
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Director: Erwin Flaxman
Assistant Director: Larry R. Yates
Managing Editor: Wendy Schwartz

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CHANGING SCHOOLS FOR URBAN STUDENTS:
The School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, and Success for All

INTRODUCTION

After a decade in which school reform resulted largely from state level legislation and mandates, educators have turned toward locally generated change. The reawakened enthusiasm for grassroots reforms may in part be the result of the common cyclical changes in education, but it also stems from recent studies suggesting that locally inspired innovations improve education more than do government requirements, program designs, technology, or even funding levels (McLaughlin, 1990). Further, when top-down reforms attempt to legislate change deeper than alterations in test schedules or curriculum requirements, changes are too often diverted by "the quiet but persistent resistance of teachers and administrators," who adapt the reform to whatever already exists, or slough it off altogether, "allowing the system to remain essentially untouched" (Cuban, 1988, p. 343).

The question for the 1990s is, then, how to involve those at the school level in creating educational change when few administrators have the time, creativity, funds, or confidence to design their own reforms from scratch (Hopfenberg, Levin, Meister, & Rogers, 1990). Ironically, the need for all these resources is especially acute when the desired reform must go beyond the piecemeal adoption of a new curriculum kit or tutoring program for a few classes or grade levels.

THE MODELS

One answer has been to offer individual schools models based on successful programs that schools can adapt to their own needs. Over the past years several university-based scholar-activists have created just such

models, drawn from the lessons they have learned in a few local schools. James Comer's ***School Development Program***, Robert Slavin's ***Success for All***, and Henry Levin's ***Accelerated Schools*** have been among the more popular models for restructuring, particularly for schools in poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods with traditionally low-achieving students. This paper highlights these models.

James Comer's ***School Development Program*** grew out of a collaboration begun in 1968 between the Yale University Child Study Center and two New Haven public schools, where 99 percent of the students were African American and over 80 percent received reduced or free lunches. Both schools were at the bottom end of New Haven schools in achievement; both had poor attendance, serious problems between students and teachers, "negative parent staff interactions," and low staff morale (Comer & Haynes, 1991). The project was initially supported by funds from the Ford Foundation and ESEA Title I, the predecessor to ECIA Chapter 1. Starting in 1976, with evidence of significant success in New Haven, the School Development Program was turned into a model for use by other schools around the country. Currently about 165 schools—largely elementary, but also middle and high schools—use the Comer Process (Yale Child Study Center, 1992).

Success for All began in September 1987 as a collaboration between The Center for Research on Effective Schooling at Johns Hopkins University and a Baltimore elementary school, Abbottston, where nearly all the students are black and over three-quarters receive free lunches. The project was specifically developed to employ a little-used change in Chapter 1 regulations that allows funds in a school with a high percentage of students living in poverty to be spent to enrich the curriculum of an entire school, rather than just for services to those children designated as Chapter 1 students. Success for All comes in three models, depending on the level of funding available in a school. As of Fall 1992, Success for All

was in 50 schools in 14 states (R. Slavin, personal communication, June, 1992).

Finally, ***Accelerated Schools***, the most popular of the three models, began in 1987 as an experiment between Henry Levin and his colleagues at Stanford's School of Education and two low-achieving San Francisco Bay Area schools, where 80 percent of the students are from poverty backgrounds: Daniel Webster Elementary in San Francisco and Hoover Elementary in Redwood City. As of the 1991-92 school year, there were 140 Accelerated Schools around the country, satellite training centers had been established in ten cities, and the Stanford group was declaring itself unable to train all the schools that wanted to become "Accelerated" (Levin, 1992; Rothman, 1991).

Common Philosophies

While the models differ in significant respects, Comer, Slavin, and Levin can all be seen as heirs of Ron Edmonds' school effectiveness movement, in that they responded with urgency to the common situation of ineffective schools educating poor minority students. Like Edmonds, these university professionals and activists insist that blaming school failure on students' backgrounds is unacceptable: *all* students can learn. Comer, Slavin, and Levin each stress the importance of high expectations for students. They also insist on the need to make change at the school building level. However, contrary to Edmonds' model, which stressed the importance of the principal's leadership, the three models allow for a more collaborative approach to change. And contrary to the Edmonds model, which as a political strategy left parents out of the loop, so that the entire responsibility for student achievement rested with the school, all three new models include significant parent involvement (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992). Because the three models assume that school change must begin at with the school building, where both students' needs and

educational resources are always unique, a common goal of their originators has been to enable quite different schools to replicate the essential aspects of their models, while responding to their specific situational needs.

While the three models share these similarities, they emerged at different historical moments, and were created by individuals with different backgrounds and educational training, who therefore saw the needs of disadvantaged elementary students and their troubled schools differently.

The following analysis is based largely on descriptions of the models by the project creators themselves, with a few comments by educators using the models. Comer, Slavin, and Levin are all prolific writers, and all three university-based projects currently have newsletters and other publications directed to interested educators. While articles by staff in schools that have developed these models exist, and are cited in this paper, until now no systematic comparison of schools using any of the models has been conducted by third-party evaluators.

THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

ORIGINS

Most observers of the School Development Program (SDP) agree that its sources are easily discernable in James Comer's personal history as an African American growing up in East Chicago, his exposure to the community empowerment ideals of the 1960s, and his understanding of psychological and sociological theories of human behavior.

In *School Power* (Comer, 1980), as well as in more recent articles, Comer has argued that the problem of urban schools results not only from the fragmentation of black families, but also from the loss of the intense, overlapping ties between parents and an extended family, the church, and the schools which were once a part of all small communities, and which reinforced the authority of teachers and principals. As schools have lost their natural and deeply embedded place in the community, there has been increasing distrust and alienation between school people and those families who have felt marginal or rejected from mainstream society. In the worst instances, schools and educators have been viewed as "the enemy" (Comer, 1987, p. 79).

Comer's New Haven project arose in the early heyday of Head Start and other "War on Poverty" projects which aimed a two-pronged offensive against poverty: education and community empowerment. Born in this spirit, the School Development Program was called by Comer and his colleagues "a social action model in that it attempts to serve children through social change" (Comer, Haynes, & Hamilton-Lee, 1987/88, p. 192).

Finally, Comer's ideas for the two schools lean heavily on a psychoanalytic approach to child development, as well as on social

psychology. While theories of social psychology undergird Comer's resolve to end the "chaotic, conflicting, and paralyzing" power arrangements between parents, teachers, administrators, and students (Comer, 1980, p. 18), theories of child development lie behind his belief that children have to form attachments and bond with whoever is teaching them if they are to develop healthily and learn well. Rejecting the "mechanical" approach to learning for which he has criticized many 1980s reforms, Comer asks,

> What happens if the one who knows less doesn't like the one who knows more—and in the nature of the immature child—decides to hurt the teacher by not learning more? What if the life experiences have left the student without the confidence to take the risks involved in learning? (Comer, 1986, p. 444).

Program Focus

Comer's School Development Program seeks to recreate the lost ties between the home and the school at the same time as it attempts to rebuild the black community. Comer's goal is to make communities once again "so cohesive and their fabric, the people, so tightly interwoven in mutual respect and concern that, even in the face of the potentially deleterious effect of poverty, their integrity and strength are maintained" (Haynes & Comer, 1990, p. 108-09).

The School Development Program calls on teachers and school staff, parents, and other community members to work together to transform the school into a nurturing place. Knowledge of children's growth and development is applied to all school activities, and social skills are emphasized. On the assumption that the best motivator for success is high expectation and much praise, the achievement of all students is celebrated (Stocklinski & Miller-Colbert, 1991).

The program follows three guiding principles (Comer & Haynes, 1991):

- a "no fault" attitude toward solving problems that arise in academic, social, or staff development arenas;
- consensus decision-making, based on child development principles; and
- collaborative participation that does not paralyze the principal.

The program uses three vehicles for participation and problem-solving: *parent involvement*, a *school planning management team*, and a *mental health team*. Parents are brought in at three levels of intensity and expertise in a Comer school: first, as classroom assistants; second, on the school planning management team; and third, in sponsoring activities such as potluck suppers, fashion shows, book fairs, and graduation ceremonies. The point is to invite parents into the school at times other than when their children are in trouble, and to use parents' strengths and develop their sense of ownership of the school (Comer, 1986; Comer & Haynes, 1991). The rationale behind this intense multi-layered parent involvement is Comer's belief that children's relationships with their teachers can't be improved without drawing parents into the circle. When schools improve the relationship between themselves and the home, children won't have "to choose between their parents and their social networks and school people" (Comer, 1989b, p. 136).

The school planning management team is comprised of 12-15 people, including parents, teachers, school staff, and a mental health specialist, and is led by the principal. The group meets weekly to plan and coordinate school activities. It is responsible for creating a comprehensive school plan and for addressing such goals as school climate, academic

achievement, and public relations. The team also responds to staff development needs, and is responsible for periodic evaluation and modification of the school plan (Comer, Haynes, & Hamilton-Lee, 1987/88).

As Comer argues, distrust and alienation are most likely to decrease when the people involved in a program are allowed to participate in decision-making. Thus, all decisions made by the school planning management team occur by consensus "to avoid 'winner-loser' feelings and behavior" (Comer, n. d., p. 3). However, the school planning management team also follows "the important stipulation that no person or group is allowed to paralyze the person responsible for program outcome, usually the school principal" (Comer, 1980, p. 69).

Third, a mental health team ensures that mental health principles are integrated into the functioning of all school activities. In New Haven, the mental health team included Comer and other members of the New Haven Child Study Center, as well as relevant professionals from the school staff. In the other schools where the Comer process has been instituted, it has included different variations. One reported mental health team is comprised of a social worker, the school psychologist, counselor, nurse, speech and hearing teacher, and the principal (Stocklinski & Miller-Colbert, 1991).

Comer's ecological approach assumes that "everybody in a poorly functioning system is a part of the problem and also part of the solution" (Comer, 1984). Patterns of aggression between staff and students are seen first as a problem of the school system, and only later, when altering the system does not help the child sufficiently, as a problem of the individual student. This is why the mental health team first works to prevent mental health problems from developing into crises by suggesting ways to manage early and potential problem behavior, including changing school policy and

programming. As Comer argues, "when a school staff fails to permit positive attachment and identification, attachment and identification take place in a negative way" (Comer, 1980, p. 327). Comer's experience, documented in New Haven, is that most school misbehavior can be eliminated simply by shifting the ways in which the school is run (Boger, 1988; Comer, 1980).

Instructional Practices

It has been pointed out that the School Development Program is not a program of pedagogy or curriculum (Payne, 1991). Although the School Development Program stresses the achievement of basic skills, observers of Comer schools in New Haven have noted that most of the curriculum used has been quite traditional. The one innovative curriculum developed by the Yale team, along with New Haven teachers, was a social skills curriculum to teach inner-city students how to be effective participants in society. The curriculum fuses academic and social skills development; it teaches students to relate to others "in a mutually caring way, developing social amenities, and learning the skills necessary to deal successfully with social institutions such as banking, the political process, and securing employment" (Comer, Haynes, & Hamilton-Lee, 1987/88, p. 196).

Despite this relative lack of interest in curriculum and instruction, SDP schools have not been afraid of instructional innovations. For example, at Norfolk, Virginia's Bowling Park Elementary School, two single-sex classrooms have been instituted, one in kindergarten and another in the fifth grade. Although the teachers of these all-black classes are white women, an important lesson for the boys has been "to rely upon one another for support, advice, and encouragement in achieving goals and solving problems" (School Development Program, 1992, p. 5.).

SUCCESS FOR ALL

ORIGINS

At The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Robert Slavin, an educational psychologist, and his colleagues have been working on such critical instructional issues as ability groupings, tracking, and teaching heterogeneous groups of students since the mid-1970s. It was his team of researchers who developed and tested cooperative education techniques, now used widely throughout the United States.

If Comer's program aims to create a new school "ethos" comprised of a web of human bonding, Success for All focuses more directly on providing poor and minority students with the specific academic and social resources that research has shown to be necessary for achievement. According to Slavin and Madden (1989), reforms of the past have failed because decision-makers rarely seek reliable, correctly conducted evaluations of program effectiveness before using the innovations for their own practice.

In the mid-1980s, the Johns Hopkins group was reviewing research for a book, *Effective Programs for Students at Risk* (Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989), when they were approached by the Baltimore school system. Their analysis of programmatic components shown to work with at-risk students–cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and a variety of continuous progress models, for instance–became the basis of the Success for All Project, which was implemented in its first Baltimore schools in 1987-88. In fact, the single criterion for each element included in Success for All was that it could be justified by the research (R. Slavin, personal communication, June, 1992).

Yet, Success for All also goes beyond the strict confines of the research, both in the assumption of the Johns Hopkins group that, by combining a number of elements that have been shown to work, the totality will work; and in the group's insistence that, given the educational components shown by research to increase achievement, *all* children can learn. In fact, Slavin and his colleagues admit that the solution to creating "success for all" children is not merely a collection of proven educational methods, for they argue that:

> The commitment of Success for All is to do *whatever it takes* [italics added] to see that every child makes it through third grade at or near grade level in reading and other basic skills and then goes beyond this level in the later grades (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1991, p. 549).

Slavin also draws several lessons from the experiences of two decades of Head Start and Chapter 1 (both of which nominally reduced the numbers of low-achieving students by giving participating students remediation and other assistance, especially in the early years). Most important, the natural heterogeneity among students in any school should not be intercepted by tracking, compensatory education, special education, or other pull-out forms of remediation. Instead, there must be very specific interventions in the regular classroom. Moreover, because of research showing the early primary grades to be so critical to success, this intervention must occur before any students fall behind (Slavin, 1991; 1990a). As the Johns Hopkins group points out,

> Learning problems must first be prevented by providing children with the best available classroom programs and by engaging their parents in support of their school success. When learning problems do appear, corrective interventions must be immediate, intensive, and minimally disruptive to students' progress in the regular program (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, & Dolan, 1990, p. 258).

Program Focus

Success for All is constructed specifically for schools whose resources are enriched by Chapter 1 funds, and which are willing to reallocate these funds to make fundamental changes in curriculum and instruction throughout the entire school–that is, to restructure. The promise of the Johns Hopkins group is that, if the Chapter 1 money is reallocated according to the dictates of Success for All, there can be a dramatic difference in students' achievement within a short time. In fact, early results suggest the importance of instituting Success for All in the pre-primary years, as its originators suggest, for the program is much less effective for students who begin it after the first grade than for those who begin in preschool, kindergarten, or even the first grade (Madden et al., 1991).

Instructional Practices

By contrast to Comer, who treats learning largely as an affective issue and so is willing to allow curriculum and instruction to remain rather traditional, Slavin and his associates direct their attention to the cognitive side of learning, and so focus on educational strategies that facilitate these cognitive processes. Based on studies showing what works with disadvantaged students living in high poverty areas, Success for All includes such researched elements as early intervention, a stress on language skills, cooperative learning programs, tutoring, and so on. Although variations are allowed, depending upon the financial resources of a school, principals and teachers who want a Success for All program in their school must agree, in writing, to include these basic components (Dolan, n. d.; Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan & Wasik, 1992):

- Either a pre-kindergarten, which most of the students attend, or a full day kindergarten, both of which stress language development.

The pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are to use the *Peabody Language Development Kits*, Story Telling and Retelling (*STaR*), and a variety of curriculum supplements.

- A *Beginning Reading* curriculum, initiated in kindergarten or first grade, which continues through the primer level. The curriculum must emphasize aural and written language skills, comprehension, and the integration of reading and writing. Students should read aloud from phonetically regular but interesting minibooks to partners and to the teacher. At the primer level, students should be given a form of *Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition* curriculum, which uses cooperative learning activities, including partner reading and team activities.

- Students grouped heterogeneously for most of the day, but regrouped by reading ability during a 90-minute reading/language arts period, so that each reading class contains 15-20 students at a single reading level. These group placements are reevaluated every eight weeks.

- One-to-one tutoring provided by certified teacher-tutors, delivered in 20-minute blocks every day to each eligible student.

- A family support team, which supports parents in ensuring the success of their children, and which focuses on attendance, coordinates outside social services, trains parent volunteers, and relates to parents regarding students' behavior. (Students are supposed to read books of their choice at home for 20 minutes each night.)

- If the school has less than 95 percent attendance, a schoolwide attendance program with a half-time monitor.

- A building advisory committee to help shape program policy and guide program development, which consists of the principal, the facilitator, and representatives teachers and parents.

- Commitment to a Success for All evaluation process, including the involvement of a contrast site, additional assessments, and the sharing of district data.

Program Implementation and Management

In Success for All schools, all teachers and tutors must be certified. (In some Success for All schools, special education teachers serve as tutors and reading teachers.) Its staff development model calls for a relatively brief initial training with extensive classroom follow-up, coaching, and group discussion. Thus, the Johns Hopkins team offers detailed manuals and two days of inservice training at the beginning of the year, while throughout the year informal sessions allow teachers to share problems and solutions and discuss individual children.

Finally, based on organizational principles shown to lead to success, Slavin and his colleagues ask that there be a commitment from key district decision-makers, that the principal be involved in adopting Success for All, and that at least 80 percent of the school staff show themselves to favor the program. The program also recommends a full-time facilitator to implement the program and provide ongoing assistance to teachers.

While the Johns Hopkins group takes a firm position on the problems to be solved as well as on "what works," they understand the importance of allowing schools to adapt programs to their own finances and needs. Thus, although they argue that it is important to have both early intervention and improvement in classroom practices (because one without the other isn't good enough), they point out that one reading

program might be substituted with another. Similarly, Comer's parent involvement program might be used instead of their own. In fact, there is some equivocation in the Success for All model about the importance of specific interventions as opposed to commitment *per se*. As Slavin has argued, what is unique to Success for All is not any specific program or service, "but the idea that programs and services are relentlessly applied until all children succeed" (1990b, p. 60).

ACCELERATED SCHOOLS

ORIGINS

Henry Levin is an educational economist at Stanford university whose research has been devoted to issues of public school finance and organization. Accelerated Schools emerged out of Levin's concern with the consequences to society of ignoring the needs of disadvantaged students, who form an ever increasing percentage of the public school population. As Levin has written, ignoring this group is likely to have several consequences, including

> 1) the emergence of a dual society with a large and poorly educated underclass, 2) massive disruption in higher education, 3) reduced economic competitiveness of the nation as well as those states and industries most heavily impacted by these populations, and 4) higher costs for public services that are a response to poverty (Levin, 1987, p. 61).

Levin is particularly critical of the standards movement, whose pressure to raise course requirements and minimum competence standards, he believes, relegated increasing numbers of students to remedial and special education classes, and may even have increased dropouts among disadvantaged students (Levin, 1987). He is also critical of existing models of remedial and compensatory education services, most of which pull students out of their regular classrooms to offer them less demanding and stigmatized instruction.

Asked where the roots of Accelerated Schools lie, however, Levin says that the school model is inspired by workers' cooperatives and work place democracy–that in Accelerated Schools he has sought to create a

democratic and efficient educational organization (H. Levin, personal communication, June, 1992).

Program Focus

Not surprisingly, empowerment and responsibility are themes that run throughout the writings on Accelerated Schools. For example, Dewey's notion of "collaborative inquiry," or what the Stanford Project calls the Inquiry Process (of working through problems by exploring and sharing), is the model not only for governing Accelerated Schools, but for deciding on curriculum and instruction. The argument for the unifying use of the inquiry process is made in this fashion:

> First, Inquiry provides an outlet for school staff to look into challenge areas of *their* choosing in an in-depth manner, rather than looking into district or state priorities in a surface manner. Second, Inquiry encourages the school community to produce knowledge as well as to transmit it–building on the main strengths at the school site. Third, Inquiry empowers those at the school site to make the changes they know are best for students (Hopfenberg, 1990, p. 17).

Implementation and Management

All Accelerated Schools go through a five-stage Inquiry Process to solve their problems, whether these problems are academic or organizational: 1) focus on the problems; 2) brainstorm solutions; 3) create a synthesis; 4) pilot test an experimental program; 5) and evaluate and assess the pilot to determine whether it effectively addressed the problem. While this Inquiry Process will necessarily lead different schools to different solutions to their problems, it also sets limits on what can happen either inside or outside the classroom. For example, as Levin (personal communication, June, 1992) has argued, it is extremely unlikely that this

process will lead to an emphasis on rote learning, or that teachers will retain their traditional obsession with discipline. Yet no school is forbidden to make a particular instructional change, if it really has arisen out of the collaborative inquiry process.

This assumption that any reform will work if everyone involved helped formulate it and is united behind it can be seen as almost the converse of Slavin's conviction that school reforms will succeed only if educators follow the guidance of the research. Yet the Stanford group's belief in the importance of participatory democracy is also born out by the research–but in a different area, that of organizational change (Tyack, 1990). In any case, to ensure that this participation does occur, a good deal of the Accelerated Schools materials focus on organizational principles, school governance structures and the decision-making process.

According to Levin and Hopfenberg (1991), three principles lay the foundations for an Accelerated School:

- Unity of purpose–that is, developing a shared common vision.
- School site improvement–that is, all groups sharing in decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies, and personnel.
- Building on the strengths of school staff, students, parents, and communities, rather than on their weaknesses.

The principle governance mechanisms of Accelerated Schools are a *steering committee* comprised of the principal, representative teachers, other school staff, students, and parents; *cadres*, which are organized around particular areas, like assessment, mathematics, family involvement, or scheduling, and meet on a weekly basis; and *the school as a whole*, which must approve all major decisions on curriculum, instruction, and

resource allocation that have implications for the entire school (Levin, 1987; Hopfenberg, Levin, Meister, & Rogers, 1990).

In contrast to the traditional school, where the principal enforces rules, regulations, mandates, and procedures, the Accelerated School principal is described as an active listener and participant, who both motivates people and "is the keeper of the dream." Similarly, in contrast to a traditional school, where teachers are relatively passive in relation to the authority of the principal, Accelerated School teachers are asked to spawn large numbers of creative ideas both in and outside the classroom (Levin & Hopfenberg, 1991; McCarthy, 1992; Christensen, 1992).

Levin and his associates have argued that it takes about six years to transform a traditional school into an Accelerated School. They have also suggested that, because of the number of years needed for real change, their project's timeline is 30 years (Accelerated Schools Project, 1992). However, the warning of the Stanford group that it will take time to produce results has been countered by its own rather active efforts in publishing testimonials and information on achievement gains in emerging Accelerated Schools. Nor has the short length of the project dampened the enthusiasm of those looking for a model to imitate, and the project has grown exponentially.

Instructional Practices

Despite the process constraints on the ideas for curriculum and instruction likely to arise, the Stanford group has established several qualities which a school's educational program should exhibit for it to be considered an Accelerated School. Most important, every Accelerated Elementary School "should aim to bring all children into the educational mainstream by a set date and should adhere to a core curriculum, instructional and organizational practices" (Hopfenberg et al., 1990, p. 8).

Second, the entire curriculum of an Accelerated School should be enriched by and emphasize language development in all subjects, including science and mathematics. Third, there should be a focus on problem-solving and higher order analytical skills. Fourth, students should be the subjects of their own education; that is, lessons should be tied to students' own culture and everyday experiences. Fifth, learning should be active; it should focus on construction, discovery, and experiment, with teachers acting as facilitators. Finally, the program must use community resources, and it must engage teachers, parents, and students in the formulation of the interventions (Levin, 1991a).

In fact, it is what takes place inside the classrooms that gives Accelerated Schools their name. As the Stanford group always makes clear, the curriculum that Accelerated School teachers choose and develop for their students is not the remedial, rote curriculum generally relegated to low-achieving students; rather, it is the enriched and accelerated curriculum that the excellence movement has traditionally reserved for gifted and talented students. As teachers come to realize, to be successful for students considered to be low-achievers, a curriculum must be faster paced (not slower) than the regular curriculum, so that the students can be brought "up to grade level by the completion of the sixth grade" (Levin, 1987, p. 66). The link between a cooperative leadership process and successful learning is made explicit in all the Accelerated Schools materials.

A CHALLENGE TO TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT

A critical question in assessing any educational program or model is how best to test what the program aims to do. For example, if an important part of the School Development Program is to develop parent involvement, then the standardized test scores of children may not be the most direct way to test the success of this strategy–or even to confirm the impact of parent involvement on achievement, especially when so much else is changing in a school. In fact, Comer describes an interesting and important result of parent involvement in New Haven: that a number of parents who had been involved in the schools went on to acquire "living-wage jobs" (1989a, p. 267). Yet this is not the kind of outcome that most schools measure. At the same time, given the importance of standardized tests and grades to the current national perception of the success of schools and school programs, it is practically impossible for any educational innovation to avoid being evaluated by such traditional measures. Moreover, schools do need ways to diagnose students, evaluate programs, and make corrections when needed; and tests, for all their problems, are readily available.

Not surprisingly, the attitudes of the originators of the three models toward traditional forms of evaluation differ, and the projects have shown varying degrees of creativity in creating alternative evaluations. While Slavin and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins show little apparent discomfort with traditional testing practices, both the Stanford and the Yale groups express serious concerns about how traditional testing can distort educational programming. For Comer (1980), the wish to quantify educational outcomes demonstrates a failure to understand education as a system. Moreover, the numbers that tests provide give the impression that there are "simplistic solutions" to educational problems. Equally critical of testing, Levin has written that, "standard assessment practices are

consistent with an absurd system in which a group of experts that is remote from school sites designs programs, curriculum packages, and regulations for compliance" (1992, p. 2). Not surprisingly, Levin blames "the insensitivity of this remote control approach" for the present failures experienced by at-risk and other students.

Both Comer and Levin also criticize traditional tests and classroom grades for their inability to take account of the kinds of "fluid, uncontrollable community settings" that their models create in schools (Comer, 1980, p. 74). As Levin writes, when the criterion for a good-enough school is that it is "good enough for our own children and, therefore, for all children" (1992, p. 2)—that is, that there is warmth and caring, that the activities build on their experiences and backgrounds, and that there are many opportunities for problem-solving challenges both alone and in groups—it quickly becomes clear that standardized test scores can't elicit this information.

In fact, of all three models, the Stanford group has devoted the most attention to helping schools rethink their assessment in creative ways. In Accelerated Schools, assessment—like all other activities—is supposed to embody the three central principles: unity of purpose, responsibility for school decisions and their consequences, and building on strengths. This means that assessments must somehow enhance the already existing capacities of students, parents, and school professionals to evaluate their own activities; these assessments must also provide information on the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum, as well as help drive organizational decisions as well. As conceptualized in the Accelerated Schools newsletter (Levin, 1991b) an evaluation of an Accelerated School should include three foci: 1) the decision-making and governance process in the school; 2) the implementation of decisions from that process; and 3) the outcomes of the decision-making and implementation process.

Accelerated Schools have also spawned several evaluations of the process of transforming a conventional school into an Accelerated School. These studies have focused on the changing role of the administrator (Christensen, 1992), shifts in decision-making and instructional strategies by individual teachers (McCarthy, 1992), and the process of creating an Accelerated Middle School (Hopfenberg, 1991). Because these assessments tend to stress the positive aspects of the process, and offer little quantitative information, they are likely to seem unconvincing as evaluations to educators jaundiced by the conventional demands for more "hard data."

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The IMPACT OF THE THREE MODELS–THE VIEW FROM TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Despite serious reservations about conventional assessments on the part of Comer and Levin, staff from all three projects has recently shown a willingness, if not an enthusiasm, for releasing information about the success of their models as conveyed by traditional measures. This is not surprising, given the desire of the education community for such assessments, as well as the fact that all three models have produced impressive gains by students, as measured by standardized tests, grade level performance, attendance, and so on.

Unfortunately, however, the very strength of these models–that they each allow for quite idiosyncratic projects–has created a problem for systematic comparison: that is, there is no standard way in which all School Development Program or Accelerated Schools, or even all Success for All schools, assess themselves. Moreover, the differences within each of the projects are only amplified by cross-comparisons. While the impact of these models can be described in terms of test score gains, attendance rates, and other "hard data," it is difficult to compare even those schools using the same model. Certainly, no conclusions can be drawn about which is the most effective of the three models on the basis of these data. What follows is meant only to be a sampling of existing data on the three models, and in no way represents all the schools from any model whose scores have been released.

The School Development Program

With its origins going back to 1968, the SDP model is the oldest of the three, and thus can show the longest streak of success. Although the Yale team was initially reluctant to alienate the New Haven community by

suggesting that they might be the kind of university specialists who test their theories and leave, over the years they have grown increasingly willing to assess their program. By 1984, four years after the Yale team had left the two New Haven schools, with no change in the socioeconomic makeup of either school, the students at King, the first Comer school, were a year above grade level in language arts and mathematics, while the students at Baldwin, the second Comer school, were seven months above grade level in these areas. Attendance had improved greatly in both schools, there had been "no serious behavior problems in either of the schools in more than a decade" (Comer, 1989b, p. 136).

These positive results are particularly interesting because, when cutbacks in Chapter 1 funds made Comer sharply reduce parent participation in the two New Haven schools, the high achievement continued. Although he continues to express an abiding belief in parent involvement, in 1986 Comer wrote, "I acknowledge that schools can be improved without significant parent participation" (p. 446). The question is, of course, what the unforseen realities of running a program do to Comer's basic philosophy or to his basic social development model.

In the late 1980s, several experimental studies with randomly selected students in carefully selected schools suggested that there are significant differences in the academic achievement of students in Comer and non-Comer schools. For example, seventh grade School Development Program students were discovered to have significantly higher averages in mathematics, as well as higher overall grade point averages than their controls in non-SDP schools. Similarly, research on elementary school students in SDP schools showed significantly greater one-year changes in grades as well as grade equivalent scores in reading, mathematics, and language on the California Achievement Test when compared to students in non-SDP schools (Comer & Haynes, 1992).

Recently, several articles have been published on Comer schools in Prince George's County, Maryland, a school system that is 74 percent minority. In 1990, at Chillum Elementary School, where the School Development Program had been operating for four years, standardized test scores showed a steady rise between three and ten percent, suspensions were down by more than two-thirds from the year before, and average daily attendance was at 96 percent. Although the gains are said to "mirror" those of the New Haven schools, these successes cannot be attributed to the School Development Program alone. Most important, the Comer Process was instituted in 1985 along with a number of other enrichments as part of a Milliken II plan, which provides schools in heavily segregated areas with special resources. Increased teacher-student ratios, a full-time guidance counselor, a reading teacher, all-day kindergarten, after-school tutorials, and summer programs were all part of wide-ranging changes created in the district (Hall & Henderson, 1990).

Finally, changes in attendance, suspensions, classroom behavior, group participation, and attitudes toward authority have all been used shown to improve under a School Development Program. For example, In Benton Harbor, Michigan, SDP schools recorded a 19 percent decline in suspension days compared to a 35 percent increase in suspension days for the district as a whole (Haynes & Comer, 1991).

Success for All

In contrast to the reluctance to use standardized tests and other traditional methods for evaluations expressed by the directors of the two other projects, Success for All is embedded in exactly these kinds of evaluation. Comprised of components whose effectiveness was already proven by test scores, Success for All has maintained a rigorous and traditional stance toward evaluation. Schools using Success for All are matched with control schools, and the effects on the students in the

program and in the control school are assessed by standardized tests developed to measure reading, language, and mathematics. In addition, Success for All researchers typically obtain information on retentions, special education placements, and attendance in both Success for All and control schools (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992).

An analysis of the Success for All schools in Baltimore, which includes one opened in 1987-88 and four additional schools opened the next school year, suggests that the project's main goal–to have all students end third grade on time and at an acceptable level of performance–can be achieved (Slavin et al., 1992). On average, Success for All students exceeded control students in reading by almost three months in grade one, more than five months in grade two, and more than seven months in grade three. Moreover, the largest effects are on those students most at risk at the program's beginning. "This is not surprising," authors pointed out, since "these students receive most of the one-to-one tutoring and other services, and the focus of the program is on bringing all students to an adequate level of performance" (p. 55).

Because Success for All has a philosophy of promoting virtually all students, retentions in its schools fall dramatically. Among students who should have been third graders, approximately half as many Success for All as control students were retained: 13 percent compared to 25 percent. In Abbottston, the school where Success for All was first initiated, only 2 percent of the students were retained. As impressive, not a single fourth grader at Abbottston who had begun the program in the first grade was in special education (Slavin et al., 1992).

Perhaps most impressive are the results of a "multi-site replicated experiment design," which included 22 first-grade cohorts, 14 second-grade cohorts, and seven third-grade cohorts, from eight Success for All schools. In simple terms, the Success for All students outperformed their matched

control groups by almost three months in first grade, almost five months in second grade, and almost seven months in third grade. Moreover, as schools move into their second and third years with a Success for All program, the distance by which the Success for All students outpace their counterparts grows. Although Success for All hasn't actually ensured success for all students–15.7 percent of Success for All students are still performing a year or more below grade level–the situation in the control schools is far worse. Finally, the question: Does money matter? Research comparing two high-funded and three low-funded Baltimore schools suggests that, although executing the Cadillac vs. the Chevy model doesn't make a substantial difference for students in general, the difference for the most at-risk students is "profound" (Slavin et al., 1992).

In 1990, Slavin and his associates concluded a study of the first year of Success for All at Abbottston with the following observation: "Because the program has many elements, the findings do not contribute to any one theory of instruction or school organization. What is significant about the study, however, is its demonstration that the problems of inner-city schools and children are not intractable" (Slavin et al., 1990, p. 273). Given the comparatively high degree of authority over program design exercised by the Johns Hopkins group compared with the other projects, such qualifications may seem odd. Yet it is important to recall that Success for All programs come in three financial versions, and that local conditions also inevitably effect the execution of each of the components. For example, a recent report describes the gradual adoption of Success for All by a school serving Hispanic elementary students whose primary language is Spanish (Dianda, 1991).

Accelerated Schools

A number of Accelerated Schools have now been operating for several years. Started in 1987, Daniel Webster in San Francisco is the

oldest Accelerated School. Although the Stanford group ceased to work with Daniel Webster in 1989, the school has continued to improve. In 1990-91, the school showed the largest gains of any San Francisco school in language, reading, and mathematics. Moreover, it had advanced from 65th place out of 67, to 23rd out of 72 schools (H. Levin, June, 1992, personal communication).

Impressive improvements--each one described slightly differently--can be shown for other Accelerated Schools, even after a much shorter existence. For example, in 1992, one year after Memminger Elementary, an all-black school in Charleston, South Carolina, became an Accelerated School, 61 percent of its fifth graders were performing at or above grade level, a substantial increase over the 34 percent at grade level previously. Similarly, students at the Hollibrook Elementary School in Houston (87 percent Hispanic, and over 90 percent reduced-cost lunches students) moved from being a year-and-a-half below grade level in 1988 to slightly above grade level in the spring of 1991 (McCarthy & Stills, 1992). Levin, who argues that similar improvements might be shown in "many other schools," points out that one important characteristic of these gains is that they extend across subjects, rather than being confined to a single subject (H. Levin, June, 1992, personal communication.)

However, a study comparing the assessment programs at Daniel Webster with those of Fairbanks Elementary in Springfield, Missouri, suggests the limited power of any standardized assessment to accurately measure what students are really learning (Meister, 1992). While this study details a range of evaluation mechanisms instituted by both schools, it points out that the use of standardized test results was "somewhat more problematic" at Daniel Webster than at Fairbanks because after five years of operation the district's testing program (which was directed by the State of California) was no longer well aligned with the whole language approach of the curriculum and instruction at Daniel Webster. In other

words, the results obtained might well have underestimated the improvements in students' learning (Levin, 1992).

In addition to gains shown by conventional measures taken at the end of the term, Levin argues that "expert observations" at any time of year will "provide a far richer set of information and a more diverse criteria" for judging the schools' a success (1991b, p. 3). Most important, Accelerated Schools show improvements in student and teacher attendance and in parent involvement, as well as real strides in creating "inviting and stimulating school programs."

WHAT CAUSES IMPROVEMENTS IN LEARNING?

The three models, Comer's School Development Program, Slavin's Success for All, and Levin's Accelerated Schools, all contain assumptions about how to improve students' learning, and about the conditions for successful change. For Comer, the key to learning is healing conflicts and creating an ethos which fosters identification and bonding, as well as a community of trust where teachers, students, and parents are all allies. Without this new ethos and community, there is no learning; with it, it scarcely matters what exact curriculum or instructional strategy is used.

For Slavin and his colleagues, by contrast, the model for enhancing student learning is more heavily cognitive. Whatever students' personal conflicts with their families and the schools (and some effort is made to bring parents into the learning process), the critical issue is that there are literacy skills that students must learn—and they must learn them quickly and well, before they fall behind. Based on traditional educational research, the Johns Hopkins researchers believe that much of what is done in education is useless, but that specific educational interventions have been shown to work in bringing the skills of disadvantaged students up to the levels of their advantaged peers. In part because educational research has focused on single interventions, where the effects are more easily controlled, Slavin's group follows the research by advocating the specific interventions that studies have shown to be effective with disadvantaged students. The sum of the parts in his package, however, remain unstudied, except in his own study of his program—which itself is unable to identify those specific elements causing the positive effects.

Finally, the assumption behind the Accelerated Schools of Levin and his associates is that in any organization the active, intelligent participation of all members is the most important insurance that the

change will be a success. In schools, a collaborative process allows everyone involved (teachers, parents, students, and administrators) to work out the reasons for their choices. Without the commitment and enthusiasm born of this participatory process, no intervention will work; with it, any intervention will be successful.

In fact, Levin would agree with Comer, who has written, "Most individuals and systems generally resist change. Thus research findings, mandates from outsiders, administrators, in-service education, and the like, rarely bring about significant or sustained change" (Comer, n. d., p. 2). Both Levin and Comer might well argue that the Success for All program would experience even greater gains if, instead of consisting of a package developed by researchers outside the school, it was generated by the school staff, parents, and students themselves. On the other hand, Slavin might well counter that participation needn't always lead to the wisest of solutions, and that the other two programs could easily become more effective, if only they paid more attention to instituting instructional strategies proven by the research.

RESOURCES AND COSTS

For schools and districts operating on extremely tight budgets, the question of how much a new program will cost–how many resources it will take away from other projects–is key. While the costs of the School Development Program are unclear, one of the obvious selling points of Levin's Accelerated Schools model is that it can be used with no initial layout by the school.

Yet, both Accelerated Schools and the School Development Program ask for an enlarged center of decision-making and concern, which can take enormous blocks of time. This means more resources, which have to be taken from somewhere. As Levin and his colleagues write, the time needed can be found by "creating early release days, by elongating other days, buying substitute time, setting up creative and flexible scheduling, extending teacher contracts, staying after school periodically, and setting up special events days" (Hopfenberg et al., 1990, p. 19). The needed time also can be created by combining related responsibilities and dissolving committees that are no longer needed. Both Comer and Levin also suggest that schools function more productively after involving everyone in decision-making. That is, time lost to the group process is gained from other areas that proceed more smoothly: less student disruption, better morale by teachers, and so on.

By contrast, Slavin points out that, in its fully funded form, Success for All adds about $1,000 per pupil to the costs of education for students in preschool through grade three–but there are versions of Success for All that cost less. He also notes that even the Cadillac version is much less than the cost of any special education intervention. As the Johns Hopkins group has also argued, reducing the retentions at Abbottston from 11 percent to zero saves approximately $240,000 a year–more than half the

program costs (Madden et al., 1991). Moreover, in Baltimore, Slavin's base of operations, urban students currently have per pupil costs of $1300 less than those in the suburban Baltimore county, and about $865 less than the rest of Maryland. These differences mean "that if Baltimore were brought up to the state average, it could afford Success for All in every elementary school and still have millions left over for improving its secondary schools" (Slavin, 1990b, p. 61).

REPLICATION

A program that works in one school benefits three hundred to a thousand children. In a country with millions of public school students, the need to extend the knowledge and benefits of innovations tried at a single site is obvious.

However, the insight drawn from mistakes in the 1980s suggests the importance of giving local schools a voice in any educational change they make. Comer likes to quote an African proverb: "If you catch a fish for a man, he will be grateful to you and dependent on you forever. If you show him how to catch fish, he will catch his own and be proud of himself" (cited in Hall & Henderson, 1990, p. 8). Not only will local conditions always affect how knowledge is used, but school people–like people everywhere–are simply more likely to follow through on changes and be committed to them when they have helped implement them. At the same time, it is also clear that most schools simply do not have the resources to begin rethinking school improvement from the ground up. They need technical assistance, models–help of some kind (Berryman, Flaxman, & Inger, 1992).

The three models investigated in this paper attempt to make use of this insight in different ways. While Slavin and his colleagues allow for individual variations by schools becoming Success for All schools, the models created by Levin and Comer are actually meant to offer help with the very process of self-creation. That is, an Accelerated School or a School Development Program largely ends up being what the school people themselves, having gone through the model processes, decide they want.

The final question to be asked by those considering models is how, if at all, they might lessen their own responsibilities for change. We know that models help schools with limited resources begin the difficult process of restructuring. But if there are ways that even the best model detracts from a school's responsibility for its own fate, then it may be that simply struggling at the local level, however painful, will yield changes that are more innovative, more deeply rooted, and more suited to the specific location. Certainly, in a country with hundreds of thousands of public schools, there is room for dozens and dozens of interesting directions for change.

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BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR

Carol Ascher is Senior Research Associate at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. She is the author or editor of four non-fiction books and the author of a novel, *The Flood*. She has also written more than 50 monographs and 25 digests covering a wide range of urban education issues. Dr. Ascher received her doctorate in anthropology from Columbia University.